

STAB! STAB!
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BEN WEASEL



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By Ben Weasel

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Introduction

Thrust into my particular situation, the average person would probably find quite a bit more to occupy his time than I. Quite a bit more in terms of social interaction and presentation, that is; I find myself to be a productive person. Take this for instance. Exactly what you're reading at this moment. As I write, I am aware that months from now, maybe even years, another person with a drastically different life than mine (let's face it, and don't take this personally, but it's bound to be the type of jerk that keeps me from socializing with the human race in general) will pick this up and imagine it being written in any one of a billion different settings, with a different type of writing instrument on a different type of paper...you get the picture.

Joe tells me that art (and I presume that writing can fall into this broad and dull category) completely operates on interpretation. Bullshit. Joe's only right 50% of the time anyway. The important thing is that when I read, I am at my happiest when I feel I am getting closer to the frame of mind that the author was in when he wrote whatever I am reading.

Pure description is helpful I suppose, but not much. I am aware that in much of my writing, I tend to get lazy with description, or omit it altogether. Sometimes it can really fuck up what you're trying to do and with that in mind, I try to keep an eye on it. But the decision to describe the shit out of something I think is more times based on a need for filler, remembrances of the stupid writing classes we've all been forced to take, or maybe just the desire to blindly babble away with words while thinking of where you're going to go next with your oh-so-important thought.

Ok, as I write this, I sit on the crack between two cushions on the couch in my living room. My feet rest comfortably in front of me on the coffee table and my knees are bent up, providing a surface for my "God Bless America" hardcover, halfsized notebook to rest on while I write this with a blue felt tip marker. My hand grips the top left half of the book as I write and I occasionally glace eight feet northeast of where I sit to look at Bob Costas interviewing Tom Brokaw on channel 5. the lamp is shining about 4 feet to my right. The telephone is at the far western corner of the coffee table. In front of it, near my feet, are my ashtray, cigarettes and lighter, aligned perfectly as I am slightly neurotic. A magazine rests under a book and a folded napkin, next to the phone. A pen and two remote controls are in the middle of the

table. In the northeastern corner, closest to the tv, there are two gay punk fanzines, a deck of cards and another ashtray. Moving south, there's a TV Guide turned upside down (showing an obnoxious Virginia Slims ad), one of those hair things that looks like a rubber band with cloth covering the band and a small strip of metal on one side, and a half roll of Life Savers. I just popped a yellow one in my mouth (actually, I dislike the yellow ones) and I'm rolling it around on my tongue and covering it with spit at this very moment.

The coffee table is made of dark wood (cheap too; a big crack is running down the middle). Various black marks on its surface indicate fallen cigarettes of days past. The table only stands roughly 8 inches off the ground. It is not an optimum table and soon I'll get a better one, but for now it is the center of my working universe.

All of this tells you something, but not much, not really. All of my business takes place within ten feet of this couch and coffee table, but to be honest, most of it takes place right here where I sit. The thing is, I could sit here every day for the rest of my life describing my surroundings and you would never have the slightest clue as to what this room really looks like. If you happened upon it without being told what it was, you would never know it. If you did know it, you would undoubtedly be disappointed.

I'm not trying to tell you that I've stumbled onto some great and noble truth here. Any moron could figure it out. What's weird is the way people can know things like this yet still insist on painting little pictures in their heads. That's just the way people are and I can't very well complain about it because I'm as guilty as the next guy. The thing that bothers me is when people paint those little pictures and somehow decide that they're reality. It happens all the time. I like to drink beer now and then. I rarely get drunk, but I'll drink a few here and there. I wrote what was supposed to be a humorous column comparing various brands of beer for Maximum Rock-N-Roll. A short while after the column ran, I went on tour with Screeching Weasel and I swear, people were popping out of the woodwork, offering me beers left and right, attempting to argue with me about my beer choices, wondering why I wasn't stumbling around in a drunken stupor. The picture they painted made an assumption for them and they probably ended up feeling stupid for acting on that assumption. Strike that, people who do that usually do it on a regular basis and are too dense to ever feel stupid about it. They probably just went home and thought about what an asshole I am for not getting drunk with them.

All of this explains why it's impossible for me to take criticism or praise very seriously. If someone really enjoys a song

I've written and tells me so, all I can think about is the situation in which I wrote it: on the toilet, sitting on my couch jacked up on caffeine, sitting on the roof, whatever. And I think about how easily it came out (the really good sons, the ones people usually really like, are always the ones that are completely written in under five minutes) and I figure if the person knew that, they probably wouldn't feel so good about liking the song. Or what I wrote. Or anything. Well, I LIKE hearing about how somebody wrote a song sitting on a toilet. I LOVE hearing someone tell me that they stole part of another song (it's only good if it's not obvious. As a sidenote, I steal quite freely but I never consciously steal from anything but tv show theme songs and commercials. If I DO steal something outright, I make it obvious and give credit where it's due).

Well, I think it's about time to get to the main point here which is, I do not tolerate misunderstandings, misinterpretations or false praise, but there are only a few people in the world whose praise I can trust as being genuine. And criticism (especially nasty, scathing criticism) is always good for a laugh but it rarely does any good coming from a stranger because the average critic is full of shit up to his eyebrows anyway. I know - I AM one.

I'm going to wind it down here and let these bizarre ramblings stand as my introduction for what you're about to read, which is an essay on a friend, a diary from the last tour I was on, a sort of odd philosophical thing on how I felt about touring right when I got home and a couple of rambling things that both started with me walking around aimlessly in the middle of the night. Ok.

7/9/92

Tour Diary Dec. 1991 - Jan. 1992

12/26/91

Screeching Weasel has never owned a van and this time, Jughead, Dan Panic, Danny Vapid and I joined Scott - roadie and temporary bass player - in his van for the East Coast journey. The van is an '89 Ford - quite a step up from my '76 Chevy Malibu that was the vehicle on the '89 summer tour.

Rolling into Detroit, Scott flicked on the AM radio and we were treated to a series of rambling blues/funk tunes that featured wino singers oozing ridiculous sexual double entendres. The radio station periodically updated the days shooting and stabbing statistics.

The show took place in a small space used for women's meetings, a soup kitchen and other various events. Before the doors opened, a girl took us down the street to "Tent City". A group of homeless men had erected a large tent on a vacant lot next to a church in order to provide a 24 hour a day food and shelter. The few occupants of the tent rose as we entered and gave their seats to us while a man identifying himself as "Robo" told us about their efforts to raise public awareness about the lack of public housing due to bureaucratic inefficiency. It's a weird situation to be in when you are a white male raised in a middle class family. I was interested to hear what was going on but I have to confess that I felt slightly overwhelmed. After all, this is something I never had to experience - homelessness - and probably never will. I tried to just listen and not worry too much about what an asshole I felt like.

Although the show was only three blocks away, it was, like a bad cliché, a different world. And I'll tell you, it's pretty depressing to feel like a loser in both of those worlds. It's like something's crawling around in my brain, something dark and ugly that makes me feel like an alien. It's like a cancerous growth that keeps me on edge all the time and won't let me settle down and just live in the moment. I wish it was something that exciting.

The next day we drove down to Dayton, where we met up with a friend of David Draino's at a greasy burger shack. After loading in at the "club" (a warehouse), we hit David's brother's house and hung out there for as long as we could afford to.

The warehouse was chock full of vapid 17 year olds swilling cheap beer and vomiting. These types of shows are always a nightmare. As I get older, I think I may be getting more conservative, or maybe I'm just getting smarter. When you let underage kids drink at a show, 9 out of 10 of them can't handle it.

Now, the same case could probably be made for over 21 shows, but it's very seldom that we play those types of shows.

I just don't understand what would make somebody want to get so drunk that they end up passed out in a pile of their own puke. The only thing I enjoy about touring is meeting the occasional person with a brain in their head; at shows like this, the likelihood percentage takes a swan dive. I was bored as hell as the show was going on and I just wanted to get out of there. Why should I have to be subjected to a crowd of obnoxious 17 year olds with a walletful of dad's hard-earned cash and a bellyful of Milwaukee's Best?

I was hanging out up front smoking a cigarette when a short red haired lady with an anarchy pin on her jacket walked in and made a beeline for me.

"Are yoo Bin Weezil?", she asked.

I nodded affirmatively. What a mistake. I found out that she had decided against going on the road with her friends in the circus in favor of working in a candle factory in Dayton. (Quote: "The bossman gave me shit the first day cause I fucked something up. The first day! I told him, 'Fuck you, motherfucker!'" - according to her testimony, she still kept the job). She offered me a place to stay and after politely informing her that my sleeping quarters were already taken care of, I ditched her and went outside.

A drunk from a warehouse party down the street stumbled by and bugged me to put him on the guest list in order to "get some nice teenage pussy". As I was declining, two young girls walked by and Casanova yelled, "Hey Baby!" For some odd reason they spurned his romantic advances. This bothered him and he voiced his irritation thusly: "What a couple of prick teases!" During all this, I tried to make my getaway back inside but he noticed me right before I slid in the door. In typical drunk fashion, he assumed that I found his pointless babblings amusing. Being the nice guy that I am, I didn't kick him in the dick and leave. He was whining about the "pussy" and the party he had been attending: "Man, the cunts at that party, it's like, man, you fuckin' lay 'em down to fuck'em and you look between their legs and it's like a fuckin' bar of soap!" This fellow obviously had problems that I was not equipped to deal with. Finally, after pestering me for the 50th time to get him in for free, he backed off and I walked back into the warehouse.

After we finished our set, Vikki the candle woman began pressuring me to spend the night with her. When I told her "NO", she pressured anyone else stupid enough to listen. I searched in vain for the doorman so we could get paid and LEAVE. Vikki snuck up on me. There was something written on her shoulder in

blood. This made me slightly curious, but the author of the bloody script would win no penmanship awards.

She backed me up against the wall and began kissing my neck. I was being sexually assaulted. I told her to back off several times, but she wasn't getting the message. I told her I had a girlfriend. she suggested that I bring my girlfriend along. I was pinned to the wall. Her arms were around me like a vise grip. Her greasy lips sucked my flesh like a weak Hoover. I considered decking her. I finally broke away, almost into the arms of the promoter. "Dayton's largest minority is Appalachians", he whispered. What a punchline.

We made it to Pittsburgh in time to see the second band finishing up. I went to the bathroom and got glared at by a herd of pot-smoking skinheads. Alex from Submachine led me through a minor maze to the bar and bought me a beer. I drank my beer and chatted with a slightly drunk guy who was planning on starting a band called Bomb Jesus or the Jesus Fucks or something like that. The two people who had come to see us the last time we played Pittsburgh showed up which I thought was kind of funny. We played a short set and then bailed for the apartment where Alex, Sean and Michelle live.

It was a non-smoking house which meant that I had to go out in the hall to smoke. It was kind of neat looking out the window down at the people scurrying around in the snow. I kind of felt like I was watching "It's a Wonderful Life" through the hallway window. It was kind of cold with the window open, but a nice kind of cold. It's odd how you can feel so alive sometimes just doing something as dumb as looking out of a window above the street. It's only a different view, one from which you aren't involved in the goings on in the street. From this view, you can see much more easily how people interact and it's much easier to see the stupidity of movements and voice inflections that we take for granted. It's easier to peg people. They are subhuman from two stories above. The window functions as the lens of a microscope and I see myself as a sober yet driven scientist studying the patterns of an odd species. Then I flick my cigarette butt out the window and go back inside to become exactly like them.

The next morning, we discovered that we had a flat and also discovered that we didn't have a spare. The tire we needed was odd sized and, it being a Sunday, we weren't able to find it. I went back into the apartment and had Jughead call to cancel the Staten Island gig. I figured the day wouldn't be a total loss because I could watch the Chicago/Dallas playoff game. Unfortunately, the tv was screwy due to a malfunctioning antenna. I was able to halfway fix it using a screwdriver, a backgammon game and a coat

hanger, MacGyver style. I was only able to get a fuzzy outline but it improved slightly after several manipulations of the contraption. We ate veggie food and watched Spartacus on tv.

The next drive was a long one up to Exeter, NH. Joe King Queer met us at the exit and took us down the twisting, turning roads to the huge farmhouse he shares with three roommates. We dropped off our bags and then took a ride over to Joe's Place, the restaurant that Mr. Queer owns. He made us a great late night meal and served us a couple of beers. Then it was back to the farmhouse where we stayed up most of the night comparing songs.

In the morning, I woke up to find that Dan's entire body was covered with a nasty, bright red rash. I thought about The Attack Of The Mushroom People. Maybe Dan was evolving into a species of Mushroom Men who would take over the van by leaving trails of fungus in his wake. Knowing that we were traveling over a good 1/3 of the country, what better opportunity could there be for the Mushroom People to leave behind their spores via Dan Panic by twisting his mind and using him as some sort of warped Johnny Appleseed. Soon, punks all over the east coast would be sprouting soft, large growths all over their bodies. The National Guard would be called in and we'd be all over the news! Although the prospect of such fame was tempting, I knew in my heart that it had to be the emergency room for him. Maybe they could stop the evil fungus in its tracks at the Exeter Medical Center. No one wanted to wait with him at the hospital so we dumped him off, went over to Joe's Place for a bite to eat. After lunch I walked back over to the hospital with two thirteen year old punk kids named AJ and Billy.

Some highschool jocks hanging out at a gas station across the street yelled something at me about my blue hair and I practically had to restrain AJ from running over and trying to beat them up. "The jocks in this town are pussies," he moped.

That night was the big New Year's Eve party at Joe's house. Like most invite-only parties, scores of uninvited boneheads showed up. Some kid walked in sucking on a large canister of butane. We retired to the back room for silence, momentarily forgetting that we were in the only downstairs room with a bathroom. A mean looking greaser/skinhead type came in and puked copiously in the toilet twice. He turned around glaring at us and growled, "Don't you fucking tell anybody I did that". OK. Butane Face picked a fight with someone in an upstairs bedroom and one punch later was lying unconscious on the floor.

Most of the boneheads went upstairs for our set and the Queers. We rang in the New Year with Joe singing, "Hi mom, it's me, the fucking stupid shit, the ugly little monkey who used to



suck your tit." After the unconscious people were dragged outside and the vomit was wiped up, we slept.

The next few days were slightly boring, except for some rational conversation and good food at the Born Against house. We played a show with Born Against in Annapolis, MD inside a Unitarian church. The turnout was huge, no drinking was allowed inside, the sound system was excellent, no fights, what a change. Born Against played a great set; McPheeters emerged from the stage covered in blood from his own nose. I sat in a chair for most of our set and Jughead kept stepping up on some drunk's back. The guy was sitting in front of the stage facing the crowd so he made the perfect stage extension. He didn't seem too happy about the whole thing judging from his furrowed brow and the grunts he occasionally emitted but he knew better than to risk our wrath.

I drove back to Baltimore with Faith, the careful one, at about 35 MPH on the highway. She claimed to know on which street John Waters lives so I hatched a plan to ring his doorbell pretending to sell magazine subscriptions in order to get him to autograph my face for the New York show the next day. I didn't get around to it, as usually happens. We did get to be in a scene that was practically straight out of a Waters movie. We went to a small convenience store to buy stuff for pasta and the woman at the counter stared us down angrily. Her hair was almost blue, and jacked up into an enormous, teetering beehive. An extra long cigarette hung from her red, splotchy lips. I couldn't stop looking at her. She was not amused. She didn't call me "hon" but other than that it was perfect. We ate spaghetti at Faith's house and slumbered peacefully.

We drove to New York the next day for the gig at ABC-NO-RIO. The only advertisement for the show was done by us two nights before on WFMU. Half the people who showed up didn't even know who was playing. Jim Testa, Johnny Puke, Mykel Board and Jane Guskin showed up so it ended up being a real celebrity showcase. Jane, although I often bash her in print, is in person very kind and intelligent. On this particular day, she was looking slightly beat up as someone's dog had bitten her face.

Mike Bullshit opened up with a band that may have practiced once. Garden Variety played next and delivered a great Hüsker Dü/Jawbreaker type set that was the best I'd heard on tour from a band I'd never heard before.

Neil, the British jerk running the show, wanted to let the doorwoman "find" a drummer so her nonexistent band could play in place of a band that didn't show. When I told Neil that I thought they should play after us, he had a temper tantrum. I think they'd call it a "snit" in jolly old England. The creep doesn't even

advertise the show and then he turns around and wants us to play games with the locals. People can be unbelievably stupid. The main reason we're able to tour is because people are willing to bust their asses to put on a show. If we had to rely on established clubs, we'd never make it. It seems to me, however, that there's a certain element that gets involved in putting on independent shows that uses shows as an excuse for treating people like shit. They figure, I think, that since they're expending so much of their energy for little or no money that they can do whatever they want to when it comes to letting friends in for free, letting lousy friends' bands play and get PAID, etc. You live and learn through experience but it never ceases to disgust me when people pull that kind of shit. Listen, if the truth is to be told, almost every band that opens for us utterly sucks. I guess that's good in a way, because it doesn't take much to upstage them, but it really gets depressing after a while.

The last gig was a short drive down to Philadelphia. It was there that I came up with a perfect example of the shitty band that doesn't have a clue how terrible they are. This band was called Public Nuisance. They played for well over an hour and after they finished, the drummer complained to me that their set gets cut short at every gig they play. When I suggested that they play shorter sets, he looked at me like I was nuts.

The show was one of the best of the tour. Attendance was high and the crowd was great. We did a couple of interviews and after we played a girl came up to me and Danny and licked our jackets. Her friend explained that she had just been released from a mental institution. We got paid 300 bucks. Public Nuisance got 100. Apparently they were bitching about how unfair it was that they didn't get paid as well as us. I didn't even want to get involved. I used to try to talk these things out, and I'd usually end up giving the offended party a few bucks to make them feel better. I'm through with that. They sucked. If they were a good band, I would have given a shit.

1/18 - The second leg of the tour began with a gig in Springfield, MO. The Springfield punks (actually, most of them weren't punks, just social outcasts of many different varieties that small town punk shows seem to attract) seemed pretty starved for entertainment. Some babbling bimbo wasted a good 3 or 4 minutes of my time talking stupid shit in my direction and then exited slurring, "Peace, pot and microdot, dude." I now realize that the appropriate response would have been to vomit on her head, but at the time I was slightly preoccupied.

The second show was in Dallas, which was quite a haul from Springfield. It was another warehouse show with plenty of

teenyboppers running around drinking and puking. One longhaired fool actually had the audacity to heave right in front of the van door. I scolded the little miscreant loudly and reminded myself to jump when I got out of the van in order to avoid the heap of half-digested hamburger lying there in a rancid puddle of Milwaukee's Best. Todd from Selfless Records set us up at Kelly's apartment. Me and Portia (who was along for the "warm" Southern leg of the tour - it was actually colder in Dallas than in Chicago) slept on an air mattress in the kitchen. The next day we went to Direct Hit, the record store that Kelly owns, and browsed. A couple of doors down there was a cool tattooing/piercing shop. We wandered around in the stores for a couple of hours and then headed down to Houston.

The gig was great but not much happened there so we left after for New Orleans where we slept at Ed's for a few hours and then got up to explore the town. We ate lunch at a brewhouse/restaurant on Decatur Street and then went walking around checking out the tourist traps. There was a great leather/dildo shop called Second Skin. I promised myself that the next time I'm there, I'm going to buy myself a bracelet reading "FISTFUCKER".

Ed didn't have a shower, so Stacy had let us into her dormitory where we were able to bathe luxuriously. Some of her dingbat friends had wanted to meet up with us when we went out; we saw them twice and successfully evaded them both times.

On the way home, we stopped at Jessica's father's house to pick up her son. It was a small, cozy house and it smelled like something nice was cooking. Her father (a psychologist or psychiatrist) was in another room with a patient. I would have liked to have stayed and had dinner, maybe chatted with the old man about Jung or something. Of course, that didn't happen. It is impossible for things like that to happen when there are five of your comrades waiting patiently in a van in front of the house. Not that it would have happened anyway, but it was such a nice homey little place I could've fallen asleep right there on the carpet next to the dog in front of the television.

Back at Ed's, we sat around bullshitting and Ed made some tasty gumbo. After dinner, I napped in the van for a couple of hours and then we took off for the club.

The show was 18+ but still had a good turnout. The opening band was great, just a bunch of serious looking sweaty guys beating on drums and other various objects. The free beer was flowing and I got slightly drunk for the first time on tour since '89. It was a good time and we loaded out equipment and hung out in the street selling records from the back of the van. Meanwhile, the

wife of the second band's guitarist was busily smashing her car into several other cars parked on the street. It seems she was A. Mad at her husband, B. Drunk and C. Psychotic. She finally took off in the car only to come roaring back down the street at 70 mph like a white trash Roxy Pulitzer on speed. She went back and forth down the stretch several times, about a mile each way, sending us scurrying like frightened rats each time. She finally slammed into a taxi head-first at about 90 or 100 mph, a couple of blocks down the street from the club. All of her idiot drunk friends ran to see if she was ok (she was, except for some minor cuts and bruises) while her husband slumped down on the street screaming and crying about his smashed car. Meanwhile, the Weasels checked out the cab driver, who had blacked out, but appeared to be ok. I truly hope he sues her ass silly. I would've puked on all of them, but I was in a hurry to get back to Ed's for sleep.

We drove up to Birmingham for a party at Jennifer's house. We were the only band playing and it was a measly two bucks to get in. You can't imagine the number of creeps who tried to get in without paying. One rich kid with a six pack in each hand whined that he only had thirty-five cents. I told him that was too bad and maybe he ought to go home to get more money. I should have bullwhipped him into submission. The whole thing was pretty low-key, although, unbeknownst to me, a fight broke out and a window got broken. After everyone left, we set up shop and screened the remainder of our t-shirts.

We drove to Auburn the next day for another party. This one was a little bit better regulated. The P.A. even had monitors and we had a lot of fun. We stayed at Hardy's palatial home and watched stupid kung fu movies on cable. In the morning, Hardy made us all breakfast and we departed for Atlanta.

It's kind of funny the way these things work. One night we're playing a party to a bunch of sweaty Alabama punks, the next night we're playing on the biggest stage in the biggest club we've ever played in. The Masquerade is a huge club with three different levels. We played in Heaven (as opposed to Purgatory or Hell). They made us food at the club, gave us cups for the pockets in the pool tables and offered us the use of a dressing room with a shower and toilet. They spent over an hour working on the lights and the monitor mix was better than what comes out of the main speakers at most shows. I scammed a shot of Courvoisier for my rapidly declining voicebox and we played to a crowd of about 150. We left right after the gig and drove down to Tampa.

Chris and Susie were waiting for us in their lovely trailer in the town of Thonotosassa. We went for breakfast at Denny's and then wandered around the streets near the club. I found two re-

released Miller books, as well as the John Waters book I've been wanting. We went back to the trailer for a quick b-b-q, then to the club for soundcheck.

Although The Ritz in Tampa is owned by the same people who own the Masquerade, it was a completely different story. The soundmen were incompetent assholes, the guy running the show had a vendetta against Chris and they even gave us a load of shit over the guest list. Iggy from Miami showed up with our old friend John from Connecticut. The Pink Lincolns were great; Chris practically broke some kid's nose by popping him with the mike. We played ok until someone lobbed a beer bottle at me. I exited stage left and the show was over. The cook at the Masquerade had come down with his band, Two Minute Hate. They were added to the bill at the last minute, but nobody stuck around for them. I guess I had fun in a perverse way...

I got the deal of a lifetime in Georgia. We had stopped for gas and I noticed that Kools were 10 bucks a carton. I picked up two. We got up to Columbia and played in Bedlam Hour's rehearsal space - another warehouse. This time, the people seemed to handle their alcohol fairly well. Johnny Puke was there doing his spoken word thing, he was going to finish up the tour with us. Although the stage was only a couple of feet high and maybe 6 feet wide, it was filled with spastic punks eager to dive off into the crowd.

Half of us went to Chris Bickel's apartment. We stayed up most of the night bullshitting with Chris and his roommates. The next day we had a gig in Charlotte, NC which normally would have been great, but this was Super Bowl Sunday. Ok, it's not very cool to be into sports and all, but I've developed a taste for football and (mostly) baseball over the last couple of years. Naturally, we were playing at the only bar in town without a tv. We got involved in some hokey backwoods bar game in which you swing a ring on a string and try to sink it onto a hook stuck in a post. Jeez. We spent the night at some punk kids' mother's house.

The last show of the tour is always a good one. It's sort of like the feeling you have after you've just had sex; kind of a calm, peaceful sort of thing. Appropriately, this was a 21+ show in Johnny Puke's hometown, Charlestown, WV, which the Puke had set up.

We played cards and drank beer until our set. I wrote up a set list containing only slow or mid tempo songs and we serenaded the West Virginia drunks for a half an hour or so.

See, touring is living. It's boring I suppose, but only as boring as you allow it to be. Time means nothing on tour, the date, the day of the week represent nothing more than towns. I rarely watch the television or pick up a newspaper while on tour. It is it's own reality but it parallels everyday reality. Like any healthy experience, it enables you to view things from a different perspective. When you're back in your own reality, hopefully you'll be able to apply what you've learned to your life. One of the most important things that tour can teach you is how to make your own fun. If you're bored, take action to make yourself interested. If you're tired, remind yourself that you can sleep when you're dead. If you're anxious or nervous...well, fuck, at least you're feeling something. Tour teaches you to make goddamn sure that you're using every minute of your life to live your life.

Of course, I'm talking about touring in the context of setting up a series of shows for a band across the country. Naturally, you don't have to be in a band to tour. And for me, it is not something I can take a lot of. Small doses of touring give me plenty to think about, and I always need a few days of doing absolutely nothing when I get back.

Then it becomes time to apply the principles I've learned on the road, and that's certainly more difficult than actually touring. Not everyone gets something from an experience and I have not gotten something from every aspect of every tour. But what I learned about living life on the last tour stayed with me long after I was home and has inspired me to do a lot of cool things. To the average joe, some of this stuff might be boring or mundane, but things like walking around and really looking at things and people has become almost a daily ritual with me. I've met a lot of cool people and seen a lot of neat things and the inspiration it's provided is worth tired feet or a full bladder. Enough said.

Strong Koffee Koncentration Kamp

Generally when I walk around alone something interesting happens to me. Like the girl I met in front of Kinko's one afternoon who introduced herself by saying, "I killed a bird today." Even if something interesting doesn't happen, it's a good chance to look around and think. Tonight I saw some things and thought about some things.

For instance, I peeked into the Lincoln Tap Room around 12:30 tonight and saw a hefty biker type guy taking advantage of open mike night. He set the skinny, homeless dogs in the alley howling in pain. Two tough-looking girls were shooting pool near the front window. I envisioned myself walking in, grabbing a beer and a cue and screaming at the top of my lungs, "WHICH ONE OF YOU DYKES WANTS TO PLAY ME FOR A SHRIMP JOG!?!?" but of course I didn't.

A few blocks down, I picked up some obnoxious coffee-house/poetry newsletter and read through its pretentious ravings. The world does not need a gang of bearded, bespectacled, pacifist, whitebread, clove smoking, cappuccino slurping, titsucking snobs to present their sniveling, timid little hunks of poetry as a valid commentary on the state of society.

Poets should be rounded up and put to work on a chain gang to build a rail system which will then transport them all to Northern Vermont where they can live in communist espresso dens and be forced to listen to each other's stinking personal bullshit neuroses that get puked out onto paper and made to look noble. A society without billboards is what these ingrates need; a society in which no blacks or hispanics are allowed to prowl the streets at night distracting them from spewing forth nonsense about justice and equality. Give 'em a good, hard spanking and send the parasitic little deviants to bed without their fucking café latté.

-7/16/92

My first friend of any sort of major significance was the son of one of my mother's friends, as often happens I'm sure. I hated his guts. This boy was named David and my friendship with him sheds some light on some of my phobias and shows how some of my views on society and people in general were shaped.

I often spent the night at David's house. He rarely slept over at my house. I think my parents probably hated him too - he was what they call a hyperactive kid.

I vaguely remember looking forward to sleeping over at his house at first. We did have some fun; if we didn't I suppose I would've refused to go (although maybe it was the sort of fun that stems from two people forced to hang out with each other who don't really like each other but are able to sort of "make the best of it"). We raced matchbook cars on his track, ran trains on another track, jumped up and down screaming like idiots and smashed into things with our little boy bodies. As we got older, I guess it must've been around nine or ten years old, we'd listen to Aerosmith and sing along (the wrong words most of the time; they were hard to figure out) and try to imagine how Aerosmith's guitarist, Joe Perry, could play a lead guitar. I think we decided he must have had roadies lift it onto his shoulders and its weight was what made him hunch over like he did (we were not well-versed in the field of drug addiction at that point). When one of us had to whizz, we'd run to the can and whizz together, crossing streams, and it was totally satisfying and hilarious.

David's father was an ogre. An older man, he was thin as a rail, going bald and gray and I got the impression that he drank heavily. He never BEAT THE CRAP out of David when I was over, but I knew he BEAT THE CRAP out of David on a regular basis. He worked hard for the railroad and usually just wanted some GODDAMM PEACE AND QUIET. I swear to god, the first time I heard him yell that I thought he was yelling at David's mother about the GODDAMM PEAS AND RICE.

In retrospect, David's father was a cowardly, child beating drunk. At the time, he was the ultimate adult. He made my own uptight father look like Bob Newhart by comparison and he scared the shit out of me. David's mother rarely raised her voice to us. "Just wait 'til your father gets home" was her phrase of choice. Most mothers use this line, but in David's house it took on a special terrifying meaning to me. David didn't seem to give a shit. He'd continue whatever verboten, moron activity he had involved himself in (dragging me along [lamely protesting] of course) as if



he didn't care that his father was going to go nuts on him. Many times, his mother was bluffing - apparently she knew that sometimes his father was just too goddamn scary today to be told that his son was trying to murder squirrels in the backyard.

My overnight visits were often scheduled on nights when David's father would be OUT OF TOWN. He went OUT OF TOWN on business a lot (he worked for "THE RAILROAD") and for this I was glad. He was always civil towards me, even nice, but I knew he was a fake. I knew he would've whipped my smart ass into shape if I was his kid. Now I can see that his OUT OF TOWN trips probably consisted of 18 bourbon and waters a night and a roomful of ugly hookers at a Holiday Inn booked by the railroad tracks.

As I mentioned, David was hyperactive. Invariably at some point during the night he'd start to annoy the shit out of me. Jacked up on Pepsi and his own fucked up genes, the kid was always doing some stupid shit that he knew his father would BEAT THE CRAP out of him for as soon as he got back from being OUT OF TOWN. It made me nervous; I always feared that one day David's father would start whacking David in front of me and, in a venomous rage, forget that I wasn't his son and start BEATING THE CRAP out of me. But David always pushed it and if I didn't go along, he'd whine, bitch or punch me until I did. God, I hated that little prick.

One night we were watching Orca The Killer Whale on tv while eating pizza and drinking soda when I started feeling weird. The movie was creeping me out and it wasn't even a scary part (I think it was the bizarre 70's underwater music). I barfed all over the coffee table and rug.

One of my few childhood memories that stands out as fresh as the day it happened is the time my mother began leaving me with a fat white trash lady and her filthy little brats while she went off to work. I must have been around 3 or 4. I remember eating a roll out of the sack my mother had left my lunch in. After eating the roll, I puked all over the fat lady's La-Z-Boy and the disgusting woman started screaming at me! My mother came and got me and I don't think I ever went back there but I never forgot that offensive woman yelling at me for puking.

Little kids puke a lot, especially after eating pizza. For me, vomiting was a traumatic experience. In fact, puking pops up all over the place in my history. While sitting on the gym floor in grade school for an assembly, a girl in back of me puked all over me and the two people on either side of me, covering our backs with stinky little girl vomit. That night, I stayed up puking into the toilet at home. I remember the time I went to some kid's birthday

AAAH!



party and stuffed myself, even eating at McDonalds on the way home. My mother went to pick up my father at work in the city and I was left alone with a bellyful of junk food. I puked in my mother's bathroom sink and the gross thing was that all I puked up was the strawberry shake I had consumed at McDonalds. I was not a big McDonalds fan after that. Vomiting was not only unpleasant, it made me feel helpless and weak. Until I was 19, I ate very little and suffered from severe nausea in stressful situations.

After I heaved at David's, I would get nauseated whenever I went to his house. I don't think I went more than one or two nights at his house without having my mother come to pick me up.

I puked because David literally made me sick to my stomach. So did the creepy fat white trash lady with the booger-eating son named Junior. I think that we use the phrase "sick to my stomach" so often that we tend to forget its basis in reality. After puking in those situations, I made a mental association with those situations and puking. David represented an element of society that I can't stomach: those who were treated in such a fucked up way that they made it their life's ambition to be fucked up themselves. I pity them, but from a distance.

Later, in my dopesmoking days, I saw David at a party at my girlfriend's house. I hadn't seen him in at least 3 or 4 years. It was a slightly uncomfortable meeting. He made some small talk and then took me for a ride with a couple of other people to his parents house (driving like a maniac, of course). We waited in the driveway, drunk and stoned out of our minds while he went inside and stole a bottle of vodka or something from the house. He drank and walked and drove in the same manner as he had jumped around pointlessly smashing things as a kid. A couple of minutes after he had dropped me off at the party, we heard a huge crunching smash from down the street. He had totaled his old man's car by smashing it into some kind of goalpost on the highschool football field. I remember some kid saying, "His old man's gonna kill him - he's a psycho." And I remember thinking that's probably exactly what he wanted.

LONELY, PATHETIC SWM

Single Jewish Females always specify their desires for Single Jewish Males in the personals. Those who don't see their religion as important don't bother. What about those Single Jewish Females who don't cop to being Jewish in the ads? Are they self-hating Jews? The SJF's looking for SJM's annoy me even more than the rest of the lonely hearts. They are larger in number than the SWCF's who are generally hip enough to realize that as a rule, spiritually strict Christians are not the type to peruse personals.

Perhaps I'm wrong. Perhaps religion is not the issue with these SJF's. It could be that the SJF's are just prejudiced and don't want any goyim sending them photos of themselves and asking for their hand in marriage. Why? If you ever want to seriously study racism and prejudice in America, take a look at the personals. SBM's want SBF's. DWF want S/W/DWM's. DHF's want SHM's. There are exceptions to the rule, but they are few and far between.

While looking through the personals this morning, I became angered at the temerity of these individuals. I figure you have to be pretty lonely to take out a personal, yet these SWM's and DJF's are arrogant enough to cut off huge parts of the population as potential sweethearts due to an ancient, tired old superstition. Oh, we all know that racism and prejudice are wrong and that's not the point. These are lonely, frustrated people and yet they still cling to the few shreds of pride they have left in what they've been told they are. It's the same fucking pride that will keep them in front of Pat and Vanna stuffing Oreos and Haagen Dazs into their wet red holes for the rest of their lives, or preparing their looks with pinpoint precision and accuracy for four hours only to end up sitting lonely in a bar wishing they'd never been born, or worse, in the arms of some fool that was able to make them feel alive for a few seconds.

They sit at home wishing someone would understand them and love them and care for them and always know the right things to say and want what they want and be 30-40, over 6 feet tall, weight proportioned to height, a nonsmoker, fond of animals, jazz and romantic walks on the beach and financially secure.

Think about the girl who would break your heart if she were to emit a foghorn of a fart while sitting next to you on the loveseat because after all, your own squeaky clean asshole has never been host to a foul, odiferous, invisible cloud of bowel fumes. Make sure she crams a strawberry-scented douche up her cunt so you won't feel disgusted by her smells as you're preparing

to peel your piss-stained, skid-marked, holey Jockey's off of your hairy, sweaty, ripe ass so you can attempt to stuff your stinky little pud up inside her. Make sure she's brushed her teeth so she can taste every molecule of your putrid beer breath inside her mouth and make sure her armpits are shaved and scented so you won't feel the same disgust that she must feel when she catches a whiff of the stench emanating from yours, you lousy fuck. Clean her up like a statue in the park and fuck her in your sitcom style position and blow a load all over her head just like the pigeons dumping turds on bronzed Civil War heroes.

And you, lady! When you can taste the metal of your own gun tickling the back of your throat, don't think about the SJM's or SBM's or D/W/SWM's you never found. Think about all the M's you could have had that would have done anything for you before you blow your empty head up and think about how shallow and selfish and spoiled you are and before you pull the trigger, put a bullet in the chamber with all the names of the men who would've died for you etched in the side. Then cry for yourself and say goodbye to an empty room.

-7/3/92

WIGGLE AND WORM

The first time I saw Jello, he was walking towards a club in San Francisco with a lovely girl on his arm. I was standing in front of the club and I said HELLO. Maybe I said it too quietly or maybe he was too used to creepy strangers approaching him. Regardless, I got no response and I felt slighted. In retrospect, it was stupid, but perhaps it shaped the way I feel about the man now. I've written quite a bit about the man and his actions, condemning him. I try to say hello back to people who say hello to me now, people who are perhaps feeling like they should say something to someone they know about but haven't met. Of course, I am not as famous as Jello, but I still feel it's my responsibility. I'll even occasionally talk to someone I don't know who I can tell knows I'm the singer in the band he likes. This sometimes is a mistake, and when I make the mistake of encouraging a lunatic, I better understand Jello.

I wonder what I would do with the money and power he has. I'm sure he feels he has no power and is not rich. If so, I'd give him the benefit of the doubt and call him naive instead of a liar. Even I'M aware of the small amount of power I have and I do not simply sit on it. Who does? There would be some differences of course, due to cultural upbringing and whatnot, but I wonder how differently I would react to Jello's situation than he has.

Then there are what I see as the facts: Like all great men, integrity and pure grit alone did not get Jello where he is today. A certain amount of dumb luck tipped the scales in his favor. He was the singer of a punk band called the Dead Kennedys. They were extremely popular and influential, and I was inspired by them. They built a career on attacking American culture and once the smoke cleared, Jello had found a comfortable niche for himself in that same culture. To this day, he continues to live like royalty off of the royalties.

Tonight, I took a walk to buy a pack of cigarettes, and just to walk. The rain had just died down and I walked along R- Street, the soggy Leaves slapping up and down on the soles of my sneakers.

I turned right and walked up D- Avenue, past the Dominick's. I lit my last cigarette and walked and smoked, not thinking about anything except what I was doing. I asked for a pack of cigarettes at the gas station and as usual, they only had my Kool's in the soft pack. I bought two packs. They were out of Drum, which was just as well. Tonight is a night for walking and smoking, not sitting and rolling. I always think about quitting

cause it's too expensive and I get easily winded on stage.

Yes, I too am in a punk band. I like my band. Jeez, if I didn't like it I wouldn't do it. But my band will never bring me the success that Jello is so familiar with. Jello was either shrewd enough or lucky enough to be in the right place at the right time. Jello stands wiggly, yet firm. I stand crooked and bankrupt. I walked past the Blockbuster Video and caught a glimpse of the girl with the black hair. She is always there. She is as regular as a healthy man's bowels. I see her inside sometimes when I'm renting some stupid movie. She doesn't look as good close up. She's too thin and she wears makeup in a way that suggests she's hiding something. But I still love to catch her out of the corner of my eye, at a distance.

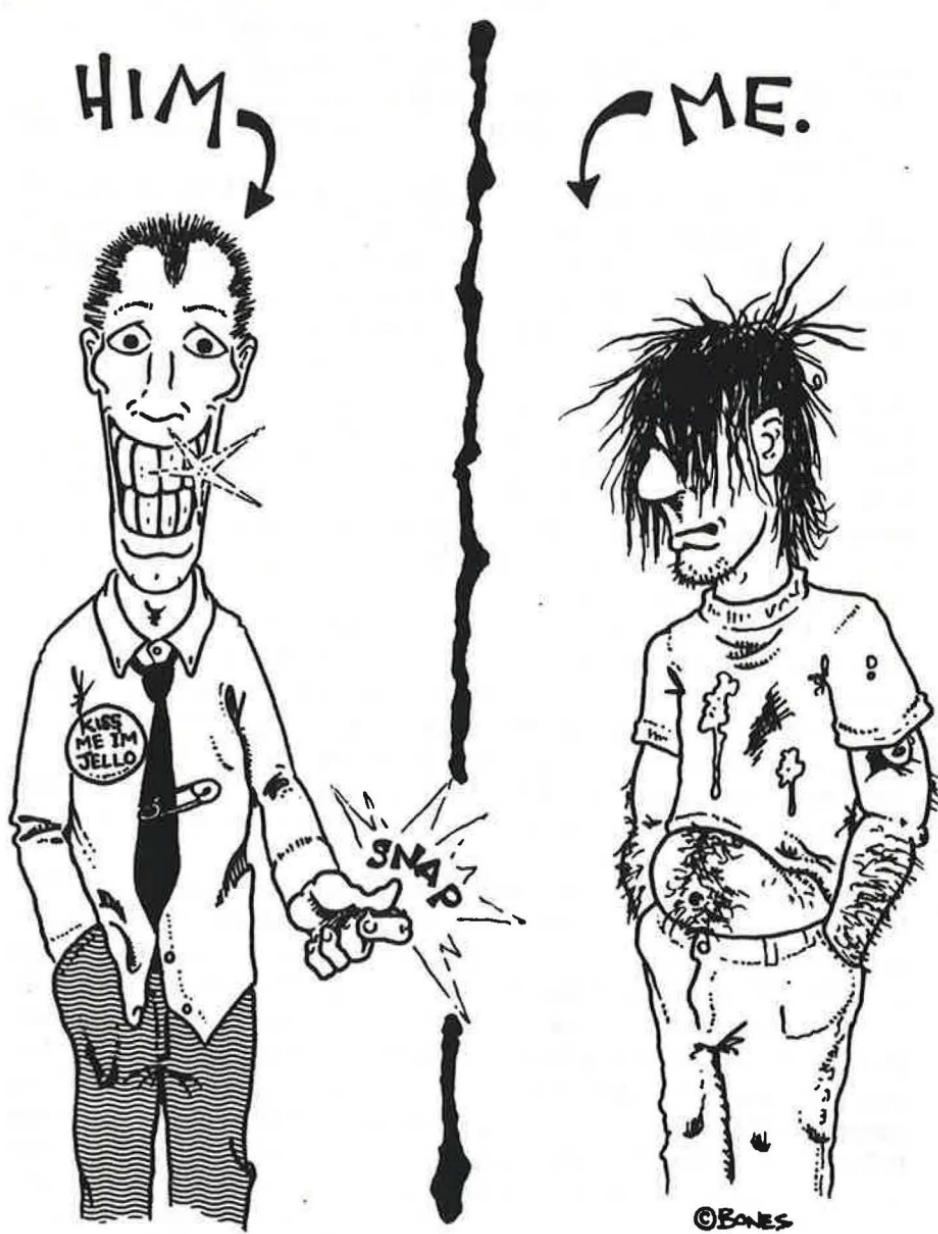
I would give almost anything to be wealthy, but I have to confess, life would not be worth living were I not able to walk and smoke at midnight.

There are several interesting shops along R- Street. I like walking past them at night, after the drunks have ambled off to wherever they rest their bloodshot eyes and the vicious, dirty children have gone to sleep, visions of rocks smashing through car windows prancing about in their evil little skulls. Tonight, the street was surprisingly busy. I encountered five different people on the walk home.

Jello is skinny. I am forever battling the blob around my waist like some weepy housewife on Geraldo. Jello is a snappy dresser. I wear clothes that make me look like a greasy suburban pot dealer. I can't seem to wear anything on my feet besides sneakers or workboots and my head does not often tolerate hats. My hair is generally a mess, whether it's a foot long or shaved into a mohawk. I even tried shaving my skull completely and discovered that I am the only person I know with a messy head. Jello is tall. I am neither tall nor short, fat or thin. I am also pretty hairy. I don't know if Jello is.

Several people have suggested to me that I meet Jello; I would find him to be a normal, decent guy, they say. I'm sure that's true. I don't want to meet him. There's no fucking heroes or anti-heroes left anymore. The men running for President next year are too boring to even get angry at. I've got Jello, and let's face it, like it or not, he's got me.

I stopped to peer inside the Mexican supermarket. They have a large sign in the window proclaiming a midweek madness sale. Someone wrote in marker on the side of the building, "LESLIE FINGERS HERSELF". Further along, on the same side of the street (south) is the dollar store. I looked in and saw scads of great junk lining the walls, most of it designed to appeal to nasty



little children's fantasies of beating each other senseless. Fake swords, Rambo combat sets, submachine squirt guns and plastic baseball bats for the boys and a variety of dolls, teacup sets and ostentatious jewelry and hair ornaments for the girls. Directly across the street I saw the hall. It still has a sign up that screams, "FOR RENT!!!!" It is the same hall that I pretended to have access to in order to get the going rate for Jello's spoken word performance.

Jello speaks and releases albums on which he sings with different bands who are on the record label he owns. This is fact, but irrelevant. The real Jello story is firmly rooted in the Dead Kennedys. I do not wish to squelch the validity of his efforts, but his riches and notoriety stem from his ex-band.

I memorized the number; it may come in handy for my band, which is unable to get a booking in any of Chicago's established clubs (I do not, by the way, cry in my beer over this. We are a punk band and thus, utterly unacceptable. I suspect that Jello encountered similar obstacles in his formative years). I crossed the street, repeating the number over and over in my head, desperately trying to cram the circle of information into the square called long-term memory.

I turned left down G-Street. A woman with a large German Shepherd was walking about ten feet ahead of me. I immediately crossed over, even though I would have to make another right at the subsequent block. In any large city, many women become frightened when they notice strange young men walking behind them on a side street at midnight. I do not wish to cause anyone discomfort and I most certainly did not want to be snacked on by the pooch.

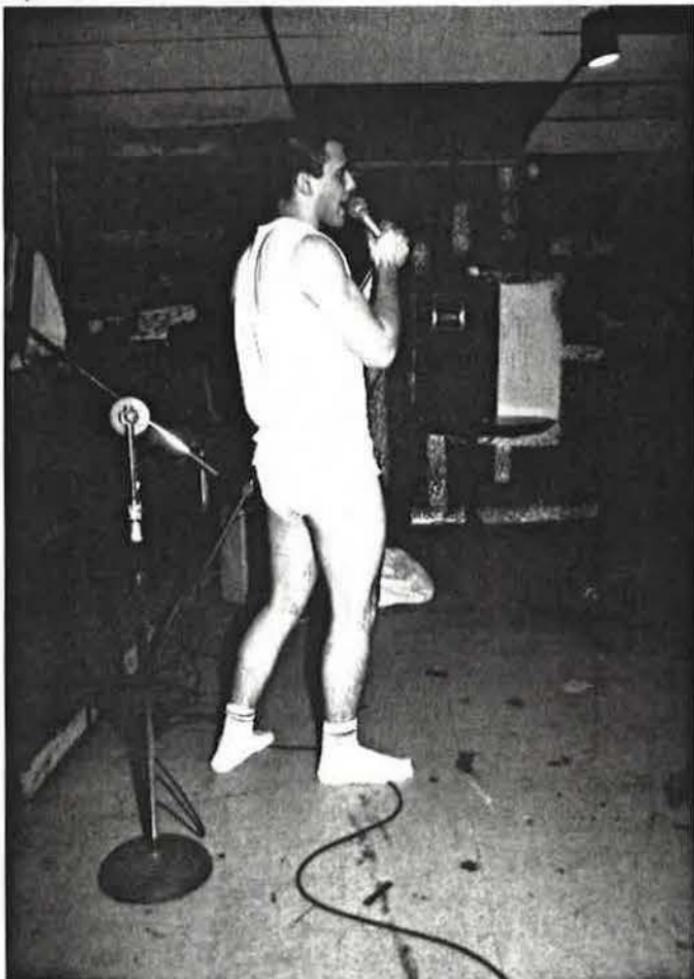
I wonder if Jello walks alone on the streets of San Francisco at midnight. I am certain he doesn't smoke. In public, he must feel the eyes on him. I have, but nowhere near as many times as Jello. What would I do? A friend in San Francisco told me he saw Jello at a recent punk show. A herd of Nazi skinheads were there and one of them, a female, asked with genuine surprise, "Are you Jello Biafra?" Later, one of the skinheads spit on him. All the money in the world can't change the fact that the man is a human being. I can't identify with Jello, I think his causes are silly and his speeches stuffy. But when I heard that story I think I understood a little more that this was just a guy. No TV cameras were there like they were for Geraldo and John Glenn and no tabloid reporters were around to fax the news into the gossip column. In fact, no one really seemed to notice some unknown skinhead gobbing on Jello Biafra. If they did, they kept it under their hats. Meeting Jello would do neither of us any good. He knows who I am and what I

do and I know who he is and what he does, at least publicly. Maybe someday when I'm an old man I'll be wandering around the streets of some city somewhere, and I'll see him, an even older man, and we'll nod and smile and keep on walking, blissfully unaware of each other's identities.

I reached the end of the block at the same time as the woman with the dog. We looked at each other and I began to cross over. She continued walking forward. We never passed. I walked inside and put on a pot of coffee.

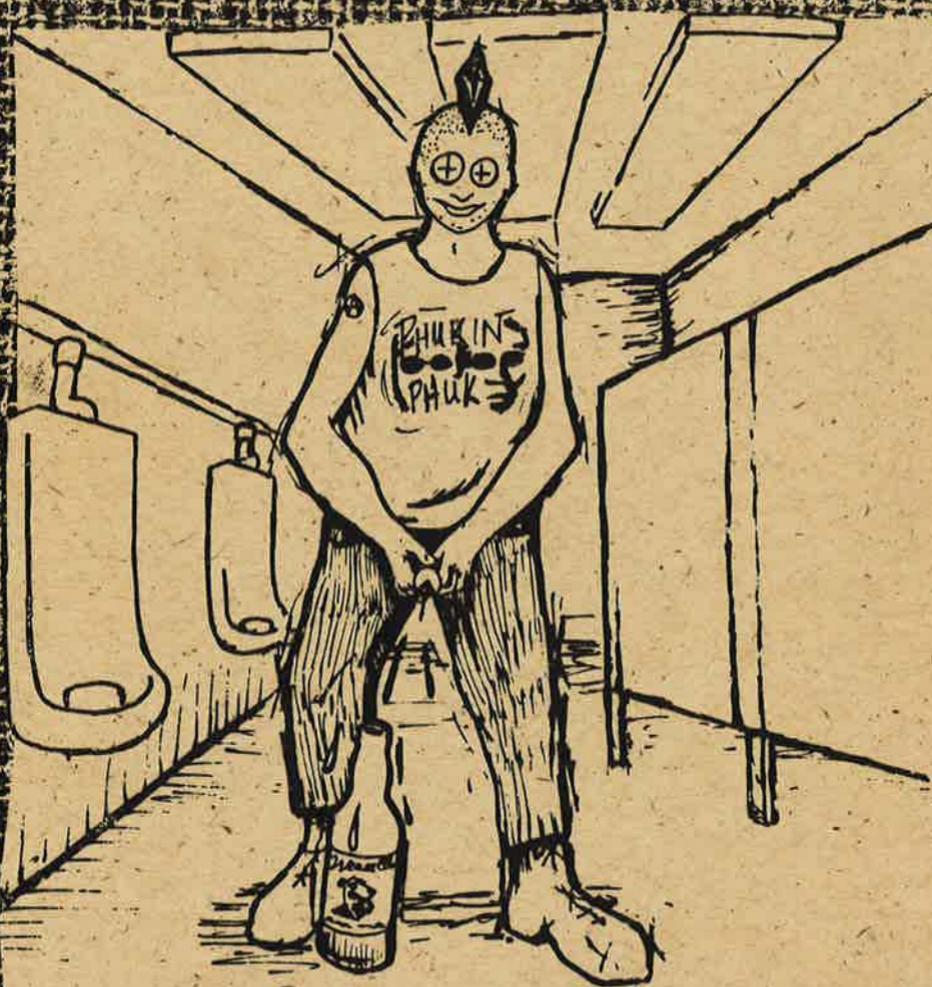
-10/24/91

Ben Weasel is a born loser and professional nobody. He spends his time playing in a punk band called Screeching Weasel, writing for free for various fanzines and concocting stupid stories that no one seems to want to pay for. He is currently working on a compilation of rejection letters entitled "Portrait Of A Fuckup". Mr. Weasel lives in Chicago with his girlfriend and the guitarist in his band. Contact him at P.O. Box 62 / Prospect Hts. IL / 60070 USA.





2.50 P.P.D.



AN OYSTER PUB.